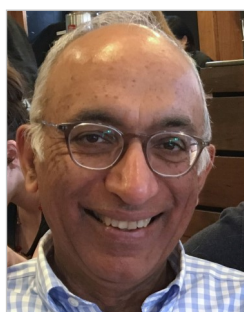


Trumps Spring Teams 2018

Headaches for partnerships

by RAKESH KUMAR



Rakesh Kumar describe himself as an enthusiastic non-expert who makes enough errors to have plenty of material for bridge columns.

The Trumps Spring Teams was very convincingly won by the team of Derrick Browne – Joshua Wyner, Steven Bock – John Newman: after the 6 rounds they were almost a full 20 VPs ahead of Lyn Smith – Jocelyn Bertram, Cath Whiddon – David Farmer in second place. Coming in third, but a further 10 VPs behind, were Mark Kolodziejczyk – Warren Dobes, Rakesh Kumar – Julian Abel.

These days, the most popular bidding system at higher levels of competition is some variant of 2/1 game force. This certainly seems to be more efficient for slam bidding when a fit is found, but it's not a cure-all. Here's a hand from the Trumps event that posed a significant problem for our partnership. Would you reach slam as East-West?

Board 16

Dealer W | Vul E-W

<p>♠ J4 ♥ AKQ83 ♦ KT74 ♣ Q4</p>		<p>♠ 86532 ♥ T9 ♦ 82 ♣ K975</p> <p>♠ AKQ9 ♥ 2 ♦ A65 ♣ AJT63</p> <p>♠ T7 ♥ J7654 ♦ QJ93 ♣ 82</p>
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W	N	E	S
1H	P	2C	P
2D	P	2S	P
3H	P	3NT	

shows shape but could be minimum

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	6	6	6	7
W	6	6	6	6	7

Playing 2/1 game force, we started 1♥-2♣-2♦. We play that after the 2/1 response, opener shows shape as a priority, so the 2♦ rebid didn't promise anything extra. I now bid 2♠ (fourth suit forcing) in the hope that partner might be able to show 3-card club support, but unsurprisingly he bid 3♥, having nothing else to say. With no idea about whether partner had a mere 10-11 hcp or as much as 15 hcp, I could do no more, so we stopped in 3NT when 6NT is cold.

This highlights one of the ongoing controversies in the theory of 2/1 bidding *viz.* is it better for opener's first rebid to focus on shape or on strength? If playing the former, even an auction such as 1♥-2♦-3♣ shows nothing extra with opener. Those who subscribe to the latter approach may choose to rebid 2 of their major with all minimum opening hands. That would have worked here, because knowing that West has some 14+ hcp hand would certainly propel the partnership to slam. For more on the issue, see this link and the readers' comments:

<https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/bw-21-shape-and-strength-system-summaries/>

Obviously this was tricky for many. Across the field, 10 played in slam (of these, 4 were somehow in 6♣) but 9 didn't. In our match, neither East-West pair got there.

High level competition is another constant source of headaches for partnerships. Nil vulnerable, you hear the bidding go Pass (by LHO)-1♦ (by partner, promising 4+ cards)-4♥ (by RHO)-Pass-Pass and partner doubles. You hold:

♠ 8642
♥ AT2
♦ QJ852
♣ 5

You	N	E	S
	P	1D	4H
P	P	X	P
?			

What will you do?

While you think about that, here's a play problem that I didn't solve.

Board 10

Dealer E | Vul All

♠ T94
♥ AQJT
♦ Q
♣ QT964

♠ A87
♥
♦ K7632
♣ A8732

♠ 5
♥ K76532
♦ AJT9
♣ KJ

♠ KQJ632
♥ 984
♦ 854
♣ 5

W	N	E	S
		1H	2S
X	3S	4D	P
5D			

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	3	5	2	-	3
W	3	5	2	-	3

At our table, the auction was 1♥-(2♠ weak jump overcall)-Dbl-(3♠)-4♦-(P)-5♦. South led a club, which seemed very likely to be a singleton. However, if trumps break 2-2, the hand seems pretty straightforward: 5 diamonds, a spade, 2 spade ruffs in hand and 3 clubs. But when I laid down the ♦A, North followed with the queen, obviously a singleton, and things got tricky. When I later put the hand through Deep Finesse, it turned out that having allowed South to ruff, I had to then endplay North ... that was beyond me.

Across the field, 12 East-West pairs played in diamonds, all but 2 of them in game. Only 5 made 11 tricks.

Back to the headache-inducing hand. Partner's double must show strength and holding ♥A102, West has good defensive values, so a pass is reasonable. However, it seems that 9 Wests backed in with 5♦ and all of the Easts duly went down.

Board 17

Dealer N | Vul None

♠ QT975
♥ 4
♦ T97
♣ J732

♠ 8642
♥ AT2
♦ QJ852
♣ 5

♠ AJ3
♥ Q5
♦ AK63
♣ KQ64

♠ K
♥ KJ98763
♦ 4
♣ AT98

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	4	-	3	4
W	-	4	-	2	3

Mind you, on the lead of the ♥3, I could theoretically have made it. The first trick amusingly went ♥2 from dummy – ♥4 – ♥5! I drew trumps in 3 rounds, finishing in dummy, and led a spade up. If I had played the ♠A, dropping the king, I would have been able to play the ♣K to the ace, then later lead a spade up and pitch dummy's fourth spade on the ♣Q. That way I would lose just one spade and one club. With no mirrors for assistance, I didn't manage that ... ♠